



PERSEVERANCE

Construct Progression

DOMAIN: APPROACHES TO LEARNING

CLAIM: Students maintain focus and persevere to accomplish collaborative activities whether those activities are chosen by them, or assigned to them.

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Background Information

Perseverance is the continued effort to engage or re-engage in an activity despite difficulty, frustration, or facing challenging aspects of the activity. Children begin school with varying degrees of understanding that sustaining behavioral engagement in activities is part of the daily routine of school. In order for children to be expected to engage and persevere through tasks, children may need to:

- Know there is more than one way to approach a task
- Have strategies for persevering despite difficulty and/or frustration
- Be able to recognize feelings and/or behaviors associated with frustration in oneself
- Know that an activity may include multiple steps or components and that this type of activity may take more time and/or effort to complete

For many children, persisting through an activity will depend on whether they are emotionally and/or cognitively engaged, particularly for young children, who need the “emotional interest” to keep them involved in the activity. Some children, however, are able to persist through activities even when emotional and cognitive engagement is low. When children are not emotionally or cognitively engaged but physically still engaged (e.g., a child is completing a picture/word matching task, but daydreaming about something else), we refer to this as being *behaviorally engaged*. Although teachers may want to think about emotionally engaging children in learning activities in order to help them persevere, when observing children for this construct, teachers do not need to know if the child is emotionally or cognitively engaged.

Rationale

Attention-related skills such as task persistence, perseverance, and self-regulation are expected to improve with the increased time during which children are engaged and participating in academic endeavors. Research has shown that signs of attention and inactivity can be detected as early as age 2.5 but continue to develop until reaching relative stability between ages 6 and 8 (Olson, Sameroff, Kerr, Lopez, & Wellman, 2005; Posner & Rothbart, 2000). Studies linking attention with later achievement are less common, but consistent evidence suggests that the ability to control and sustain attention as well as participate in classroom activities predicts achievement test scores and grades during preschool and the early elementary grades (Alexander, Entwisle, & Dauber, 1993; Raver, Smith-Donald, Hayes, & Jones, 2005). These attention skills, which are conceptually distinct from other types of interpersonal behaviors, are associated with later academic achievement, independent of initial cognitive ability (McClelland, Morrison, & Holmes, 2000; Yen, Konold, & McDermott, 2004) and of prior reading ability and current vocabulary (Howse, Lange, Farran, & Boyles, 2003). Examining attention separately from externalizing problems has clarified the role of each in achievement, suggesting that attention is more predictive of later achievement than more general problem behaviors (Barriga et al., 2002; Hinshaw, 1992; Konold & Pianta, 2005; Ladd, Birch, & Buhs, 1999; Normandeau & Guay, 1998; Trzesniewski, Moffitt, Caspi, Taylor, & Maughan, 2006); (Duncan et al., 2007, p. 1430).

From *Engaging and Re-Engaging Students in Learning at School* (2008): Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004) conclude: Engagement is associated with positive academic outcomes, including achievement and persistence in school; and it is higher in classrooms with supportive teachers and peers, challenging and authentic tasks, opportunities for choice, and sufficient structure.

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Understanding	Skills	Performance Descriptors	Example
Children understand that classroom activities often involve working through many practice trials to complete a task.	A. Begins to persevere in familiar and/or interesting classroom activities but quickly discontinues involvement in the activity after one or very few attempts.	<p>A child demonstrates this skill by engaging in a familiar and/or interesting classroom activity, AND THEN doing ONE of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discontinuing involvement in the activity after very little time spent engaging during the time allotted for the activity (e.g., in writing activity, writes for very little time out of time allotted); Engaging for one or very few tries (e.g., one or very few math problems out of the total in a set); OR Making very few attempts at steps of the activity. 	<i>In science class, the students have been studying dinosaurs. Mrs. Ollis tells her class that they are to create a poster using all of the information they know about their favorite dinosaur. Josh appears very excited about this because he loves the T-Rex. Josh quickly gets started by drawing a picture of the dinosaur and then shows it to Mrs. Ollis, telling her in his home language that he is finished. She asks him where his facts are and he says in his home language that he couldn't remember any facts and when he went to the book bin to get a book about the T-Rex he couldn't find it, so he couldn't add any more to the poster.</i>
	B. Perseveres in familiar and/or interesting classroom activities, but discontinues involvement after persisting through trials for a short period of the allotted time.	<p>A child demonstrates this skill by engaging in a familiar and/or interesting classroom activity, AND THEN doing ONE of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discontinuing involvement after working for a short time during the time allotted for the activity (e.g., in writing activity, writes for a short time out of the time allotted); Engaging for some tries (e.g., complete some math problems out of the total in a set); OR Completing some steps of the activity. 	<i>Mr. Graham has given all of his students a brand-new writing journal. Emily is very excited about receiving her new journal, and asks if she can illustrate her cover. The teacher tells her yes, he would love for her to personalize her journal. Emily eagerly pulls her journal out to begin illustrating and then stops drawing and starts writing in her journal. Mr. Graham asks Emily why she has not finished illustrating her cover and she says, "I am," and goes back to working on it. Emily stops drawing again before the morning writing time has ended.</i>
	C. Perseveres in familiar and/or interesting classroom activities and works through most trials, but discontinues persisting before the	<p>A child demonstrates this skill by engaging in a familiar and/or interesting classroom activity, AND THEN doing ONE of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discontinuing involvement after working for MOST of the time allotted for the activity (e.g., in writing activity, writes for most of the time allotted); OR Engaging for MOST trials or steps of the activity 	<i>During self-selected reading time, Cinda has selected a realistic fiction book with a horse as the main character because horses are her favorite animal! She begins to read the book, and after a few minutes Cinda is back in the classroom library selecting a different book about horses, this time an informational one with lots of pictures. Cinda goes back to her desk and begins reading, and then stops and starts flipping through the</i>

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	end of the allotted time.	(e.g., complete most math problems out of the total in a set).	<i>pages looking at all of the pictures and not persisting to read as is expected during self-selected reading time.</i>
	D. Perseveres in familiar and/or interesting classroom activities throughout the activity, persisting through trials throughout the allotted time.	<p>A child demonstrates this skill by engaging in a familiar and/or interesting classroom activity, AND THEN doing ONE of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuing involvement throughout the time allotted for the activity (e.g., in a math activity, engages for the entire time allotted); OR Engaging for all tries or steps of the activity (e.g., attempts all math problems out of the total in a set). 	<i>The class is writing a letter to soldiers who will not be able to come home for the holidays. Miss Layton reminds her students to refer to the "How to Write a Letter" poster as they are writing to ensure that they are following the correct format. Jamie's dad is a soldier too, so she is very excited about this assignment, and knows how hard it is not to be with your family on a holiday. However, Jamie cannot remember how to write the letter, and has to keep returning to the poster with the letter writing format. When the time is almost up for the students to turn in their letters, Jamie asks her neighbor how to address the letter.</i>
Children understand that persevering through difficult classroom activities requires effort to persist despite difficulty and/or frustration.	E. Perseveres in classroom activities that are novel and/or moderately difficult for the child, fading in effort at points of challenge in the activity.	<p>A child demonstrates this skill by engaging in a NOVEL and/or MODERATELY DIFFICULT classroom activity, AND THEN doing ONE of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistently discontinuing involvement in the activity after encountering a challenge in the activity; OR Discontinuing involvement when encountering a challenge, and then reengaging ONLY when support is offered by the teacher (e.g. Without the child asking, teacher suggests appropriate 	<i>After working for a short period of time on the word problems the class has been assigned, Raul pushes away from his desk and stops working. The teacher asks Raul why he pushed away from the desk. He says, "This problem doesn't make sense."</i>

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		resources/materials/strategies to continue working in the activity).	
	F. Perseveres within the allotted time in classroom activities that are novel and/or moderately difficult for the child, sometimes persisting and maintaining effort at points of challenge in the activity.	<p>A child demonstrates this skill by engaging in a NOVEL and/or MODERATELY DIFFICULT classroom activity, AND THEN doing ONE of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Persisting and putting forth effort at least ONCE when faced with something difficult in the activity (e.g., Child may say, "This is really hard, but I am going to give it a try," or the child may say, "I can't do this," and may put their head on the desk, but shortly after puts forth effort and re-engages in the activity independently); OR Persisting for MOST tries or steps in the activity, even after encountering challenges (e.g., Child uses appropriate resources/materials/strategies to continue working in the activity, including requesting help from the teacher or peers but sometimes needs help from the teacher to reengage but does not request it). 	<p><i>The class is assigned to write an alternate ending to a story. Flora struggles to complete one sentence, then stops writing and puts her head down on her arms. The teacher then observes Flora go to the Word Wall and copy some words. This was a strategy that the teacher showed the class last week. Flora returns to her desk and continues writing her ending to the story. After a few minutes, Flora stops writing and puts her head down on her arms again.</i></p> <p><i>Children were instructed to create a story based on their favorite character from the books this week. Bilan tried to write a couple of words and appears frustrated. She says, "this is hard" in her home language and walks over to her friend Asar. The teacher hears her ask in her home language, "how do you write the word funny?". After Asar shows the correct spelling, she goes back to her desk and continues writing.</i></p>
	G. Perseveres throughout the allotted time in classroom activities that are novel and/or moderately difficult for the child, persisting and maintaining effort at points of challenge in the activity.	<p>A child demonstrates this skill by doing ANY of the following THROUGHOUT an activity that is NOVEL and/or MODERATELY DIFFICULT for the child:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuing to work on the activity without expressing or demonstrating that s/he encountered difficulty; Continuing to work on the activity and expressing afterwards that it was difficult; OR By engaging in an activity AND THEN encountering difficulty but still persisting in the activity (i.e., ignoring frustration or using other 	<p><i>The class is starting a new unit in science on the phases of the moon. Mrs. Adams asks the students to write down everything they already know about the moon to get an idea of their understanding. Mrs. Adams notices that Grey is getting more paper out of his notebook and does not seem to be writing. As she walks over to his desk, she sees that he started a list that had only one fact about the moon and then she sees that he is not writing because he is instead drawing the different phases of the moon. Grey looks up from working and says to Mrs. Adams, "I couldn't think of many facts</i></p>

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		strategy to continue working)	<i>about the moon so I thought if I drew pictures of how I have seen the moon that would help me think about it."</i>
	H. Perseveres throughout the allotted time in classroom activities that are very difficult for the child, persisting and maintaining effort at points of challenge in the activity.	<p>A child demonstrates this skill by doing ANY of the following THROUGHOUT an activity that is NOVEL and/or VERY DIFFICULT for the child:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuing to work on the activity without expressing or demonstrating that s/he encountered difficulty; • Continuing to work on the activity and expressing afterwards that it was difficult; OR • By engaging in an activity AND THEN encountering difficulty but still persisting in the activity (i.e., ignoring frustration or using other strategy to continue working) 	<p><i>During a reading activity, Cassie has selected a brand-new book from the classroom library that Mr. Bostick had just ordered from the book fair. Mr. Bostick instructs the students to think about the main character as they read, looking for character traits, and to make a list of all the examples they found during the reading block. Knowing that the book Cassie selected is significantly above her reading level, Mr. Bostick observes that Cassie is going back and re-reading pages she had previously read and then adding examples of character traits that were out of order from the text. During the activity, Cassie asks to get a drink of water. When Mr. Bostick asks Cassie how her reading is going, she replies that it is really difficult and she needs to take a short break from reading. After taking a break, Cassie resumes working on the activity and continues re-reading pages she had previously read in order to create her list of character traits.</i></p>

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Resources

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